

## **Methodology: Cultural/TEK Study: Bristol Bay Project**

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe the subsistence, nutritional, social, linguistic, and spiritual importance of salmon to the Yup'ik and Dena'ina of the Nushagak and Kvichak River drainages of Bristol Bay. This information will be integrated into a larger study, called the Bristol Bay Assessment, being conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency to inform a decision whether to initiate an advance action under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act. An advance 404(c) action was requested by nine tribal governments of the Bristol Bay region. If initiated and finalized, a 404(c) action could restrict certain discharges of fill material into wetlands, streams and rivers in the Nushagak and/or Kvichak watersheds (such as discharges from large-scale metal sulfide mining) if those discharges would result in significant adverse impacts on the fishery, including the subsistence fishery.

### **Design:**

The product of this study consists of two parts.

- A. Summary of existing research: One part of this assessment consists of a literature and gray literature search and summary of the culture history, linguistic, subsistence and other aspects of cultural lives of the traditional and cultural lives of the Nushagak and Kvichak drainage people as it relates to streams and fishery subsistence, particularly salmon
- B. Elder and Culture Bearer Interviews: Second, this study will incorporate elder and culture bearer interviews to ascertain the importance of salmon and other stream-related resources and places in the ideal culture of the people. Ideal culture is a standard to aspire to and thus is a measure of values and ideology that form the core of the people's contemporary identity. We are not

undertaking a statistical sample of attitudes reflecting everyone in the culture, but listening to culture bearers who have the status of expert witnesses and act as spokespeople for their respective cultures.

The remainder of this methodology will describe the elder and culture bearer interviews.

### **Selected Villages**

Both time and money prohibit interviews in all villages in the region. Since this is not a statistical study, nor a hearing, we believe that a self selected group of elders and culture bearers can best represent the perspective of the region. We intend to interview elders from six villages.

### **Semi-Structured Questions:**

The interview format will be semi-structured, meaning the same questions will be asked of each of the elder/culture bearers. The only differences are that there are some questions that will only be asked of women, and some only asked of Yup'ik or Dena'ina respectively. If an elder/culture bearers wishes to provide additional information, that, of course, will be recorded.

### **Interview Questions**

Draft Interview questions will be formulated in the following categories:

- Subsistence
- Nutrition
- Language and Stories
- Place names and Special/Spiritual places
- Social Factors
- Spirituality related to streams and fishery

The draft interview questions will be distributed for review by

- Village councils or similar authority
- E.P.A. personnel
- Selected anthropologists

and reformulated and condensed as needed.

### **Self-Selection**

Village councils, traditional councils, or similar entity will be asked to select elders/culture bearers to be interviewed. We anticipate this will involve about three men and three women in each village.

### **Release**

Interviewees will be asked to sign a consent form allowing the interviewers to use the recorded and transcribed interviews in a written document. In addition the village councils will be asked to sign a release form for the village to permit photographs and video both of individuals or the village to be taken and potentially used in the final product. Restrictions will be respectively adhered to.

### **Recording and Transcription**

Interviews will be recorded either individually or in small groups. A digital recording and transcription will be made. Elders may wish to speak in Yup'ik in which case we ask a translator provide a summary at the time of the interview. Elders and culture bearers will be paid according to current standards for village/Elder interviews. The interviews will be approximately two-hours and conducted at a comfortable place.

The interviews will be transcribed into MS Word documents and both the recording and transcription be archived either at the National Park Service Alaska or suitable repository. Copies of recordings and transcriptions will be sent to tribal councils.

### **Coding**

Word document interviews will be coded. Key words will be set up for use in identifying the subject of the paragraph of the transcribed recording. For example, through sophisticated searches everyone who responded to or used the term “sharing salmon” will be electronically listed and some or all of these responses either quoted or paraphrased in the final document.

### **Confidentiality**

According to Institutional Review Board standards, names of interviewees will not be revealed in the final document. Each interviewee will be asked to sign a consent form that includes the voluntary nature of the interview, confidentiality, and that there is no known or perceived risk in granting the interview.

### **Peer Review**

Both drafts and a final document will undergo peer review. For the purpose of this study anthropologists, EPA reviewers, other scholars, and Village Elders or Culture Bearers are peers.

### **Community Review**

The final draft will be sent to communities who have participated in this study for their review.